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# Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------031293 141127Z /14
P R 141015Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5176
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1385

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ET, SO, UR
SUBJECT: SIAD'S STRATEGY

REFS: A. MOGADISCIO 1274 AND B. MOGADISCIO 1311

SUMMARY: DIPLOMATICALLY SIAD IS PRESENTLY PLAYING A WAITING GAME WHILE HIS MILITARY SUCCESSES IN ETHIOPIA CONTINUE. HE IS WAITING FOR THE SOVIETS TO COMMIT THEMSELVES. HAVING PERSUADED HIMSELF THAT ETHIOPIA IS IN DISSOLUTION, HE WILL PROBABLY INTERPRET ANY INCREASE IN ETHIOPIAN MILITARY CAPABILITY IN TERMS OF AN UNSHAKABLE SON ET COMMITTMENT TO ADDIS. ANY ETHIOPIAN MILITARY SUCCESS OR THE THREATENED ROLL-BACK OF WSLF FROM ETHIOPIAN TERRITORIES WOULD BRING ON A CRISIS IN SOVIET-SOMALI RELATIONS. BUT
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EVEN SO, IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCLUDE THAT SIAD WOULD THEN OUST THE SOVIETS FROM SOMALIA. SO LONG AS SIAD HOLDS AREAS OF ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY, SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA REMAINS USEFUL FOR HIM. DESPITE ARAB SUPPORT OR PROMISES OF WESTERN DEFENSIVE SLP, HE HAS LITTLE ALTERNATIVE AT PRESENT. BUT WHAT EVER HAPPENS, SOVIET-SOMALI RELAPUONS WILL BE DIFFICULT AND TROUBLED. US CAN ONLY WATCH AND WAIT.

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1. OVER TWO WEEKS AGO I SUGGESTED THAT SIAD'S OPTIONS WERE

STILL OPEN (REF A). WHILE I BELIEVE THIS MAY STILL BE TRUE
AND THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND MOGADISCIO ARE STILL
IN FLUX, I THINK THAT HBME OF BASIC ELEMENTS OF SIAD'S
STRATEGY ARE MORE EVIDENT THAN WAS OBVIOUS AT END OF JULY.

2. DURING PAST MONTH SIAD HAS KEPT SILENT. DIPLOMATICALLY
HE HAS PLAYED A WAITING GAME. HE HASN'T TALKED TO VISITING
JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING OTTOWAY AND COLIN LEGUM, BOTH
IMPORTANT NEWSMEN IN AFRICA. HE HAS CONFINED HIMSELF TO A
FEW CONFIDENTIAL DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS IN CARRYING OUT THE
CLANDESTINE BUSINESS OF SUPPLYING HIS FORCES FOR THE
ETHIOPIAN WAR. HIS REMARKS ARE NOT GETTING PUBLICIZED
OTHER THAN IN OFFICIAL CHANNELS.

3. I MYSELF HAVEN'T SEEN SIAD SINCE JUNE. NEITHER HAS
SOVIET AMBASSADOR SAMSONOV, WHO REPORTEDLY BROUGHT BACK
FROM MOSCOW A MESSAGE FROM BREZHNEV BUT IS STILL COOLING
HIS HEELS. WHILE HIS DIPLOMATS ABROAD HAVE BEEN DOING A
LOT OF TALKING--SOME WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS--SIAD HAS
MAINTAINED HIS SILENCE. THE MESSAGES TO WASHINGTON AND
TO OTHER CAPITALS HAVE BEEN CARRIED BY HIS DIPLOMATIC
COURIERS, LIKE ADDOU, AND THEIR REPORTS ON SIAD'S POLICY
DECISIONS HAVE TAKEN ON A HIGH DEGREE OF SUBJECTIVITY IN
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THE TRANSLATION.

4. DURING THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, WHAT HAS SPOKEN MOST
LOUDLY FOR SIAD ARE HIS MILITARY SUCCESSES--MOST
CONSPICUOUSLY IN SOUTHERN HARERGE AND EASTERN BALE. THE
ETHIOPIANS HAVE RETREATED FROM DOLO. IMI HAS APPARENTLY
BEEN ABANDONED AND INSURGENCY FORCES ARE MOVING TOWARDS
NEGELE IN SIDAMO. DESPITE THE HOLD UP AT JIGJIGA, HARRER
AND DIRE DAWA, THE WSLF HAS GIVEN NO INIDCATION THAT IT
INTENDS TO LET UP.

5. WHAT ARE THE LIMITS TO SIAD'S ETHIOPIAN AGGRESSION?
HOW FAR DOES HE INTEND TO CARRY THE WAR? WITH SIAD HAVING
BRUSHED ASIDE THE OAU MEDIATION EFFORT AND LEAVING APART
FOR THE MOMENT HIS PROBLEM WITH WEAPONS AND LOGISTICS, I
SEE TWO OBVIOUS DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WOULD HALT HIS ETHIOPIAN
ADVANCE: (A) AN ABRUPT STIFFENING OF ETHIOPIAN MILITARY
RESISTANCE; AND (B) THE COLLAPSE OF THE MENGISTU REGIME.

6. I LEAVE TO ART TIENKEN IN ADDIS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER
MENGISTU'S SUCCESSOR WOULD
BE MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO

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ACCOMMODATE SIAD IN THE OGADEN. I WOULD ONLY SAY THAT FOR SIAD'S PURPOSE, I THINK ANY SUCCESSOR REGIME IN ADDIS ABABA WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO MENGISTU. BUT I DO THINK THAT SOME OF SIAD'S HOPE LIES IN THE POSSIBILITY OF DISMEMBERING THE OLD ABYSSIAIAN EMPIRE AS HE HAS KNOWN IT. HE CANNOT DO IT ALONE AND ITS FULL COLLAPSE WOULD DEPEND UPON FACTORS HE CERTAINLY CANNOT CONTROL. BUT I THINK IT REMAINS A POSSIBILITY FOR HIM, HOWELUR REMOTE. WITH ETHIOPIA'S TOTAL COLLAPSE THE POSSIBILITY WOULD ALSO ARISE THAT THE USSR WOULD HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO DEFEND IN ADDIS.

7. HAVING CONCLUDED THAT MENGISTU'S ETHIOPIA IS IN DISSOLUTION, SIAD PROBABLY WOULD INTERPRET AN EPMG MILITARY RECOVERY PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF SOVIET MILITARY AID.

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THE RECENT ETHIOPIAN DEFEATS HAVE REINFORCED HIS BELIEF THAT ONLY A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN SOVIET SUPPORT WOULD HALT THE WSLF ADVANCE AND BEGIN TO THROW THE GUERRILLAS BACK.

8. DURING THIS PERIOD, HE HAS REPORTEDLY MADE TWO CONFIDENTIAL STATEMENTS WHICH BEAR ON SOVIET MILITARY SUPPORT TO ETHIOPIA. HIS WARNINGS WERE TIED TO AN INCREASE IN ETHIOPIAN MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS:

A. ON AUGUST 7 SIAD TOLD THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR THAT AT FHTE FIRST SIGN OF CUBANS OR EAST EUROPEANS IN ETHIOPIA FIGHTING AGAINST THE WSLF, HE WOULD ASK THE ARAB LEAGUE FOR TROOPS (MOGADISCIO 1311).

B. ON JULY 27, HE GOLD AMBASSADOR ADDOU THAT HE HAD WARNED THE RUSSIANS THAT IF SOVIET EQUIPMENT WERE USED AGAINST THE WSLF, HE WOULD CONSIDER IT AN ACT OF HOSTILITY AGAINST SOMALIA (MOGADISCIO 1298).

9. IN SHORT, MORE EFFECTIVE ETHIOPIAN RESISTANCE TO THE WSLF SEEMS TO BE ONE TRIPWIRE WHICH WOULD FORCE A CRISIS

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------031233 141127Z /14
P R 141015Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
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AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1385

EXDIS

IN SOMALI-SOVIET RELATIONS. SO LONG AS THE WSLF IS
SUCCESSFUL, THERE CAN BE NO REASON FOR SIAD TO CHANGE HIS
POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION. BUT IF THE MILITARY
TIDE CHANGES AND A SOVIET SUPPLIED ETHIOPIA BEGINS
TO ROLL BACK THE WSLF ADVANCE, THEN THE CHARACTER OF
SOMALI-SOVIET RELATIONS MUST ALSO CHANGE. SIAD WOULD INTERPRET
HIS REVERSES TO MEAN THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS CHOSEN THE
INTERESTS OF ETHIOPIA OVER SOMALIA AND WOULD THREATEN
TO BANISH THE RUSSIANS FROM SOMALIA.

10. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF BLACKMAIL IN THIS STRATEGY
AND IT HAS PUT THE SOVIET UNION IN A DIFFICULT POSITION.
SO FAR, THEY HAVE MANGED TO MAINTAIN THEIR POSITION IN
ADDIS DESPITE ETHIOPIAN REVERSES. COULD THEY MAINTAIN
THEIR POSITION IN SOMALIA DESPITE WSLF SETBACKS?
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11. I SUSPECT THEY COULD. WESTERN ARMS CANNOT BE
COUNTED ON TO DEFEND WSLF GAINS IN ETHIOPIA. AN
ATTEMPT TO "INTERNATIONALIZE THE SITUATION" BY APPEALING TO
ARAB LEAGUE FOR TROOPS IS AN ALTERNATIVE BUT IN MY VIEW
NOT A PARTICULARLY RELIABLE ONE FOR SIAD. IT IS THEREFORE
DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT AT A TIME WHEN SIAD WAS LOSING
HIS GAINS ON THE ETHIOPIAN FRONT, HE WOULD ALSO OUST
THE SOVIETS AND THROW AWAY THE ONLY HIGH CARD HE HAS -- THE
SOVIET POLITICAL AND MILITARY INTEREST IN SOMALIA. SO LONGAS THE
WSLF RETAINS SOME AREAS OF ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY, THEN THE SOVIET
PRESENCE IN SOMALIA REMAINS USEFUL TO SIAD. SINCE AN OUSTER

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WOULD GIVE THE SOVIETS A FREE HAND IN THEIR MILITARY SUPPORT
FOR ETHIOPIA, HE MUST KEEP THEM TIED TO SOMALIA IN THE HOPE
THAT MOSCOW'S SOMALI INTERESTS MIGHT INDUCE THEM TO MEDIATE
A FAVORABLE SOLUTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

12. EFFECTIVE ETHIOPIAN RESISTANCE WOULD ALSO TEND TO
DIMINISH HOPES FOR A TOTAL COLLAPSE IN ADDIS AND SCALE
DOWN THE EXTENT OF SOMALI EXPECTIONS. SIAD MIGHT THEN
BE WILLING TO FORFEIT HIS DISMEMBERMENT AMBITIONS AND NEGOTIATE
A SOLUTION WHICH WOULD PERMIT HIS RETENTION OF LARGE AREAS
OF THE OGADEN. WHETHER THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD BE WILLING
TO SETTLE FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN A TOTAL EVICTION OF
WSLF TROOPS IS ANOTHER MATTER.

13. BUT IF THE SOVIETS DID MANAGE TO RETAIN THEIR
POSITION IN SOMALIA WHILE NEGOTIATING AN ETHIOPIAN SETTLE-
MENT, THEN THE BASIC CHARACTER OF SOMALI-SOVIET RELATIONS
WOULD HAVE UNDERGONE A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE. A NEW REALITY WOULD
HAVE EMERGED IN THE HORN. THE NEW RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE MARKED
BY RESETMENT, SUSPICION AND MISTRUCT. IT WOULD BE DURING
THIS PERIOD THAT WESTERN OFFERS TO HELP SOMALIA WITH ITS DEFENSIVE
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NEEDS MIGHT BEGIN TO ACQUIRE A NEW MEANING. BUT AT PRESENT,
THAT POSSIBILITY IS ONLY A HOPE. I THINK THAT THERE IS LITTLE
THE US CAN OR SHOULD DO AT PRESENT EXCEPT WATCH AND WAIT.
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# Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**
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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
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22 May 2009
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009